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## REVIEWS.

### A FRESH STUDY OF ANCIENT CIVILIZATION.<sup>1</sup>

In giving to the public this historical survey of the moral evolution of humanity until it finally culminated in Christian thought and belief, Mr. Taylor has made a valuable and, we are glad to add, readable addition to the literature of his transcendent subject. He modestly explains that his purpose is to treat human development from the point of view of the ideals of different races as those ideals disclose themselves in the art, literature, philosophy and religion, as well as in the political fortunes of each race. To the performance of his great task he brings a vast erudition, and whether he has succeeded or not in satisfactorily proving his thesis — that human history is to be found in what mankind has thought rather than in what it has achieved — his book will be found stimulating and suggestive to all who read it. Some of these, however, will be inclined to think that Mr. Taylor does not carefully differentiate thought from feeling, and that the emotional element of man's nature is altogether different from the intellectual, thus warranting a separate treatment of the suprarational. It is somewhat hazardous, they will think, to accept as the faithful portraiture of a nation's life the moral and artistic conceptions of its priests, lawgivers, and bards, for while these may reflect the condition of the educated classes, they tell us nothing of the silent masses.

Mr. Taylor is nearer the truth when he emphasizes the important influence exercised on the ethical ideas of a people by the character of their political constitution. The absence of consistent thought in the Orient, for example, is largely owing to the absolute nature of the eastern state. But when we turn from Egypt to India — from the Book of

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<sup>1</sup> *Ancient Ideals. A Study of Intellectual and Spiritual Growth from Early Times to the Establishment of Christianity.* By Henry O. Taylor. Two volumes. New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1896.

the Dead to the Rig-Veda — we go from darkness to light, from the mud flats of the Nile to the rarified atmosphere of the Himalayas. While the Vedic Aryans, on account of the circumstances of their previous life, were unable to build walls and temples and similar trappings of civilization, their work was of a far nobler kind. In like manner, succeeding races, such as the Greeks and Romans, might have often been simpler in their manner of living; but they were frequently more truly men than their predecessors were.

In his discussion of Greek ideals Mr. Taylor is on ground that he has evidently made his own, and some of his observations are particularly interesting. Respecting the pathetic element in Greek sculpture, for example, he writes as follows: "There was no pathos in the Olympian *Zeus* or in the *Athene Parthenos*; nor is there any in the sculptures from the pediments of the Parthenon which have been preserved, nor in the frieze. In the metopes which show the conflict between Centaurs and Lapiths, pathos enters of necessity, for a battle implies wounds and death. Hence there is great pathos in the expiring Lapith form of the famous metope; there is pathos in the agony of the Centaur whose back is pierced by a sword. Yet in these Parthenon metopes there is no heightening of pathos for its own sake; such as exists is necessary to the general theme and its main thought, a great and ethical thought, the ruin involved in lawless crime."

It is in Homer, however, that we find the Greek spirit, although not in its maturity, and subsequently it raises and expands those qualities which it had attained, reflecting them in art, conduct, and philosophy. "The Greek," says our author, "desired the utmost, the best, the veritable elements of life. He desired it all intensely, eagerly, strenuously, for his deepest thoughtfulness was not morbid; he did not feel distaste for life because of its limitations; no yearning for the impossible turned him from endeavor for the utmost that might be had. His was complete acceptance of life, with even finer discrimination in selection. Desire

for the thronging contents of physical and intellectual life appears in the Iliad and Odyssey. The full and many-sided natures of the Homeric heroes contain wondrous many of the feelings and desires which make life's contents still." In Rome, life brought with it no such pure development of the individual as had obtained in Greece. To order well his house and serve the state was the compass of duty on the part of the Roman. Successive changes in the political constitution brought spiritual changes, to be sure, but the sombre characteristics of the Roman still obtained. Rome's institutions were distinctly legal.

Not until the appearance of Christianity did the true ideal, in the opinion of Mr. Taylor, make its appearance. By himself man can do but little save in modes of renunciation. But Christianity has attainment absolute and universal. "Followers of Christ," he says eloquently, "gain all and give up nothing: they give themselves, and perfectly save and fulfil themselves. The universal, the infinite, God and his creation, is reached; the Christian's individuality is retained. Not love alone, but the kingdom of heaven, and every mode of the life absolute and eternal as set forth by Christ, implies distinctions between subject and object, and asserts the eternal continuance of individual personalities. For faith there must be a believer and an object; for hope there must be one who hopes and something hoped for; for love there must be the lover and the loved; and knowledge requires a knower and a known. If human personalities were merged even in God, there could not be for man that life eternal which is to know God. These modes of life pass into each other. God the source of all, God's ways and nature; and the great verities of God's power and righteousness and love; these constitute the truth of God for man. In man, according to the truth of Christ, life dawns with belief and obedience, rising and broadening to faith, then love and knowledge, and again knowledge, shown by love, and love increased by further knowledge to perfect love at last, complete abiding in the love of God."

The quotations and running commentary we have made will, we hope, give our readers some idea of the scope of Mr. Taylor's remarkably stimulating book. A full criticism of it and comparison with similar works — especially in the field of morals with Lecky's well-known treatise — is impossible at this time, but we trust that we may be able to accomplish it at some not distant period. R.

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A HISTORY OF MODERN FRENCH LITERATURE.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Wells's book is in title and *format* a companion volume to his *Modern German Literature* reviewed by us about eighteen months ago, but in content it is a decidedly more ambitious and important piece of work. This is partly due to the greater complexity of his task, partly to a natural advance in critical methods. To a larger field he has brought more matured powers, and the result is a book which is at once the best thing we have of its kind and a credit to American scholarship.

It at once suggests comparison with a work of Professor Saintsbury's — not the latter's *Short History of French Literature* but his recent attempt to compress into one volume the whole range of nineteenth century English literature. This is practically, though not entirely, what Dr. Wells has tried to do for French literature. The first three chapters which cover the "Middle Age and Renaissance" and the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are really but a sort of *prolegomena* to the ten chapters that deal with the literature of the present age. Hence one is fully warranted in comparing the work of the Edinburgh with that of our own Sewanee professor. The comparison is in our opinion (which may of course be biassed) not at all unfavorable to Dr. Wells. He may not indeed be quite as widely read in his subject as Professor Saintsbury is in his — at least he does not so frequently obtrude his reading, — but he

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<sup>1</sup> *Modern French Literature.* By Benjamin W. Wells, Ph.D. (Harv.) Boston, Roberts Brothers, 1896.